

## **Monroe, LA – News Star**

### **Swanson Center for Youth receives very high marks**

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The Swanson Center for Youth is being recommended for accreditation after receiving high marks in a recent audit by the American Correctional Association.

The ACA auditors found the center was in 100 percent compliance on 38 mandatory standards and 97.45 percent compliant on 329 non-mandatory standards. Both sets of standards encompass all aspects of the facility, including treatment, safety, environmental factors and medical and mental health care.

"I am not surprised by the auditors' findings at Swanson Center for Youth, because I know how hard Director Carolyn Atkins and the entire Swanson team have worked to achieve this important milestone," said Mary L. Livers, Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice.

Accreditation is valid for three years, and the last time Swanson was reaccredited was in 2000. Staff will appear before the ACA Commission on Accreditation for Corrections before receiving the final award of reaccreditation at the annual conference in January.

"I am very pleased, and I will be honored to stand and represent the Swanson staff at the ACA national conference next January, to receive the official notification of the facility's accreditation," Livers said.

Livers credits the hard work of both staff and the youth at Swanson for the achievement.

"Meeting the exacting ACA standards does not happen overnight," Livers said. "The fact that the staff and the youth work together every day to meet the highest standards means that everyone involved takes personal responsibility for their part in meeting the mission. It's all about providing the highest quality services for our youth."

According to a new release from the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, ACA auditors found the campus to be "well kept and maintained, and youth said they are satisfied with the services."

An auditor who participated in both the 2000 ACA audit and the most recent one said "the transition from a correctional model to a therapeutic environment was very

apparent."

OJJ Deputy Assistant Secretary-Facilities Sean Hamilton said the accomplishment was "nothing short of extraordinary."

"This is a validation that we are on the right track at Swanson," he said in the news release. "The bottom line is that we are doing what is right for the youth in our care and custody."

OJJ's Community-Based Services (Probation and Parole) unit was recommended for reaccreditation by ACA last month, attaining 100 percent on all applicable standards. OJJ's central office was accredited in 2009.